

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 259

INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 2669

LIMDIS

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UR, XF

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S CALL ON SYTENKO

1. SUMMARY - DURING MY CALL FEBRUARY 20, M.D. SYTENKO, CHIEF OF THE
MFA NEAR EASTERN DEPARTMENT, CLAIMED THAT THE BEST WAY TO FINESSE THE
RECOGNITION IMPASSE BLOCKING THE WAY TO A RECONVENED GENEVA MEPC
WOULD BE TO SET ASIDE THE QUESTION OF RESOLUTIONS AS WELL AS THE
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PROBLEM OF THE BASIS OF THE CONFERENCE. SYTENKO SAID HE HAD THE

IMPRESSION THE PLO WOULD GO ALONG WITH SUCH A PROCEDURE, EVEN THOUGH IT WOULD AMOUNT TO UNOFFICIAL RECOGNITION BY BOTH SIDES, SYTENKO ADMITTED THAT HE WAS UNSURE OF SYRIA'S GOALS AT THE MOMENT, AND THOUGHT THAT RENEWAL OF THE UNDOF MANDATE WOULD PROBABLY OCCUR ONLY AT THE LAST MINUTE. SYTENKO TOOK A VERY SKEPTICAL VIEW OF ANY SYRIA-JORDAN FEDERATION, AND CLAIMED IT WAS UNCLEAR IF KING HUSSEIN'S ACTIONS CONSTITUTED AN ATTEMPT TO REVERSE THE RABAT DECISION. CONCERNING THE RUMORS THAT QUADDUMI MIGHT LEAD A PLO DELEGATION TO THE UPCOMING PARTY CONGRESS, SYTENKO SAID THIS WAS QUITE POSSIBLE, BUT THAT THIS WAS A PARTY MATTER WHICH DID NOT INVOLVE THE MFA. SYTENKO EXPRESSED INTEREST IN THE PENDING TRIP TO THE MIDDLE EAST BY UN USYG GUYER, AND SAID HE WOULD BE IN MOSCOW MARCH 9 AND 10. END SUMMARY

2. I RAISED FIRST THE SUBJECT OF GROMYKO'S LETTER TO WALDHEIM, AND EMPHASIZED TO SYTENKO THAT THE US -- CONTRARY TO WHAT MAY HAVE BEEN IMPLIED IN THE LETTER -- HAS NO INTENTION OF HINDERING ANY FORWARD MOVEMENT TOWARD RECONVENING THE GENEVA MEPC. I STRESSED THAT THE US WANTS TO MAINTAIN NEGOTIATING MOMENTUM, AND THAT TO DO SO WE WOULD BE CONSULTING NEXT MONTH WITH VARIOUS COUNTRIES IN THE AREA. HOWEVER, THE LEVEL OF SUCH CONSULTATIONS HAD NOT YET BEEN DECIDED. SYTENKO RESPONDED THAT GROMYKO'S LETTER HAD BEEN SIMPLY A REPLY TO ONE FROM WALDHEIM, AND HE POINTED OUT THAT "NOW THE US KNOWS EVERYTHING." SYTENKO SLIPPED OFF A QUESTION ABOUT WHAT GROMYKO HAD HAD IN MIND WHEN HE SAID THE GENEVA CONFERENCE SHOULD BE "WELL-PREPARED." LIKEWISE, ASKED IF THERE WAS ANY SIGNIFICANCE TO THE OMISSION FROM GROMYKO'S LETTER OF THE PHRASE "FROM THE VERY BEGINNING" WHEN REFERRING TO PLO PARTICIPATION, SYTENKO REPLIED "DO YOU WANT THEM ON THE SECOND DAY?"

3. ON THE GENERAL QUESTION OF GENEVA, SYTENKO INSISTED THAT THE ENTIRE ARGUMENT ABOUT WHETHER ISRAEL SHOULD FIRST RECOGNIZE THE PLO, OR WHETHER THE PLO SHOULD FIRST RECOGNIZE ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST, AS A CLASSIC "CHICKEN AND EGG" SITUATION. ACCORDING TO SYTENKO, THE QUESTION OF MUTUAL RECOGNITION SHOULD BE "POSTPONED", AND THAT ALL PARTIES SHOULD COME TOGETHER IN GENEVA TO PRESENT THEIR VIEWS WITHOUT REFERENCE TO ANY SECURITY COUNCIL OR GENERAL ASSEMBLY OR ANY OTHER RESOLUTION. SUCH A PROCEDURE, HE ADDED, WOULD "AMOUNT CONFIDENTIAL

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TO UNOFFICIAL RECOGNITION BY BOTH SIDES", AND WOULD CONSTITUTE A GENUINE "NEGOTIATION WITHOUT PRECONDITIONS". IN THIS REGARD, SYTENKO CITED THE EXAMPLE OF THE VIETNAM NEGOTIATIONS IN PARIS AS A SITUATION INVOLVING PARTIES WHICH HAD NOT RECOGNIZED EACH OTHER. ASKED IF HE THOUGHT THE PLO WOULD BE AMENABLE TO SUCH A PROCEDURE, SYTENKO REPLIED THAT "WE COULD SPEAK TO THEM, AND MY IMPRESSION IS THAT THE PLO WOULD GO TO GENEVA IF THE QUESTION OF THE BASIS OF THE CON-

REFERENCE AS WELL AS RESOLUTIONS WERE SET ASIDE." I EMPHASIZED OUR BASIC POSITION THAT WE WOULD NOT WANT TO MAKE UNACCEPTABLE CHANGES IN THE ESTABLISHED GENEVE FRAMEWORK, TO WHICH SYTENKO REITERATED HIS THESIS THAT "WE SHOULD IGNORE UNRESOLUTIONS AND JUST HOLD A CONFERENCE AND START NEGOTIATIONS." WHEN I NOTED THE PRACTICAL POLITICAL PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN HAVING ISRAEL SIT DOWN WITH THE PLO IN THE ABSENCE OF PLO RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST, SYTENKO SAID HE DID NOT IGNORE THESE PROBLEMS BUT FELT THEY COULD BE OVERCOME. HE THOUGHT ISRAEL INSISTED ON TOO MANY PRECONDITIONS IN APPROACHING NEGOTIATIONS.

4. SYTENKO OFFERED NO SUBSTANTIVE REPLY WHEN I ASKED HIS VIEWS OF INFORMAL NEGOTIATIONS PRIOR TO A RECONVENED MEPC. ALSO, HE DID NOT REFER TO THE POSSIBILITY OF US-SOVIET BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS. HOWEVER, IN HIS GENERAL COMMENTS ON GENEVA, SYTENKO SAID THAT THE MAIN THING IS TO DEFINE STRICTLY WHAT WE -- THE US AND THE SOVIET UNION -- WANT, AND THEN WE SHOULD "SPEAK" TO OUR RESPECTIVE COLLEAGUES. IN THIS REGARD, SYTENKO CLAIMED THAT THE US POSITION "HAD BEEN MORE CLEAR AND CONCRETE BEFORE", BUT THAT NOW IT WAS MORE DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO UNDERSTAND OUR POLICY.

5. CONCERNING SYRIA, SYTENKO SAID IT WAS UNCLEAR TO HIM EXACTLY WHAT DAMASCUS WANTS. HE ADDED THAT SYRIA STILL INSISTS ON PLO PARTICIPATION AT GENEVA, BUT BEYOND THIS HE HAD NOTHING TO OFFER. HE CLAIMED TO HAVE "NO IDEAS" ABOUT HOW THE QUESTION OF EXTENDING THE UNDOF MANDATE WOULD BE RESOLVED THIS TIME, BUT HE THOUGHT THAT IT WOULD PROBABLY BE SETTLED ONLY AT THE LAST MINUTE.

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6. SYTENKO TOOK A VERY SKEPTICAL VIEW OF THE RUMORED FEDERATION BETWEEN SYRIA AND JORDAN. HE INSISTED THAT MOSCOW "HAD NO CONFIRMATION" OF ANYTHING DEFINITE, AND ADDED THAT ANY FEDERATION "WILL BE VERY DIFFICULT" TO ACHIEVE, AS "PREVIOUS EXPERIMENTS" ALONG THESE LINES HAVE DEMONSTRATED. SYTENKO ALSO CLAIMED TO HAVE LITTLE HARD INFORMATION CONCERNING THE SITUATION WITHIN JORDAN, AND SAID IT WAS "UNCLEAR WHETHER KING HUSSEIN WAS ATTEMPTING TO REVERSE THE RABAT DECISION." HE ADDED THAT THE ARABS THEMSELVES SEEMED DIVIDED OVER KING HUSSEIN'S ACTIONS, CONFIDENTIAL

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AND IN THIS REGARD SAID THE EGYPTIANS WERE ATTACKING HUSSEIN WHILE THE SYRIANS WERE EXPRESSING SUPPORT. SYTENKO ALSO ACKNOWLEDGED HE HAD HEARD RUMORS OF A FATAH-SA'IQA SPLIT OVER THIS ISSUE. SYTENKO REAFFIRMED THAT KING HUSSEIN WILL COME TO MOSCOW THIS SUMMER, BUT HE INSISTED THAT NO SPECIFIC DATE HAS YET BEEN FIXED.

7. ASKED ABOUT THE RUMORS THAT QADDUMI WOULD LEAD A PLO DELEGATION TO THE UPCOMING 25TH PARTY CONGRESS, SYTENKO REPLIED THAT IT WAS "QUITE POSSIBLE" THIS DELEGATION WAS COMING, BUT THAT THERE WERE "MANY PEOPLE" SCHEDULED TO ATTEND THE CONGRESS, AND THAT THIS WAS STRICTLY A PARTY MATTER WHICH DID NOT INVOLVE THE MFA. SYTENKO CLAIMED THE PLO STILL HAS NOT FOUND A PROPER REPRESENTATIVE FOR ITS OFFICE IN MOSCOW. IN RESPONSE TO MY MENTION OF RUMORS CONCERNING AN EROSION IN ARAFAT'S STATUS, HE SAID HE HAD HEARD THEM, BUT THAT HE HAD NO "OFFICIAL INFORMATION" ON SUCH A DEVELOPMENT.

8. I ASKED FOR HIS VIEWS ON THE UPCOMING TRIP TO THE MIDDLE EAST BY UN USYG GUYER, AND SYTENKO REPLIED THAT HE HAD MET AND OBSERVED GUYER IN THE COURSE OF PREVIOUS TRIPS TO MOSCOW. SYTENKO SAID THE ARGENTINIAN HAD MADE A VERY FAVORABLE IMPRESSION BECAUSE HE "UNDERSTANDS THE PROBLEMS." SYTENKO ADDED THAT GUYER WILL BE IN MOSCOW ON MARCH 9 AND 10, FOLLOWING HIS VISIT TO VARIOUS MIDDLE EAST COUNTRIES.

9. CONCERNING LEBANON, SYTENKO SAID THE SITUATION SEEMED MUCH QUIETER, AND HE EXPRESSED THE OPINION THAT IT WILL PROBABLY BE STABLE "FOR SOME TIME." HE ADDED THAT THE RELIGIOUS ISSUE REPRESENTED THE MAJOR SOURCE OF TROUBLE, BUT AFTER AWHILE IT SEEMED THAT "NO ONE KNEW WHAT HE WAS FIGHTING FOR."

10. COMMENT - USUALLY RETICENT IN EXPRESSING SUBSTANTIVE VIEWS, SYTENKO SEEMED EVEN MORE EVASIVE THAN USUAL IN THIS CONVERSATION. HIS PROFESSIONS OF LACK OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE FAST-MOVING EVENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST MAY WELL BE TRUE, HOWEVER. IN THE FACE OF THESE DEVELOPMENTS, THE SOVIETS SEEM TO FEEL THEIR BEST COURSE IS TO KEEP REPEATING THEIR STANDARD PHRASEOLOGY.
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